

earliest days. In the last 100 years, The Borough has survived and rebounded from natural disasters, such as nor'easters and hurricanes, as well as fires and other disasters. It even enjoyed a brief period of notorious fame during Prohibition as a center for illicit trade on water and land for illegal whiskey.

On this great occasion, I want to express my best wishes to Mayor Richard W. O'Neil, Council Members John Bentham, Dolores Monohan Howard, Sherry Ruby and Robert M. Rauen, and all of the dedicated men and women who make the Borough services work day-in and day-out.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege and an honor for me to pay tribute to the Borough of Highlands, a beautiful community with an unsurpassed location, a place with a proud history, a bright future and many, many great people.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2000

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, it is with profound pleasure that I speak today in honor of the 179th Anniversary that marks Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire. Greece had remained under the Ottoman Empire for almost 400 years. Even though they were deprived of all of their civil rights during this time they continued to educate their children in their culture, their language, and their religion under the threat of death. On March 25, we celebrate this courage on the 179th Anniversary of freedom and independence in Greece.

I wish we had more to celebrate—to be able to celebrate on Greek Independence Day the return of the Elgin Marbles to their homeland. Taken from Greece in 1806, these ancient sculptures from the Acropolis of Athens have been on view in the British Museum. In this age of open communication, friendship, and a unified Europe, lets hope that these marbles will soon be returned to their home.

This year the Greek Independence Day parade will be honoring His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of America. I join with my Hellenic neighbors in honoring him on the auspicious occasion of the Greek Independence Day Parade.

I am very fortunate and privileged to represent the largest Hellenic community outside of Athens, one of the most vibrant communities of Hellenic Americans in this country. It is truly one of my greatest pleasures as a Member of Congress to be able to participate in the life of this community, and the wonderful and vital Hellenic American friends that I have come to know are one of its greatest rewards.

While commemorative resolutions are no longer allowed in the House, there is enormous support for Greek Independence Day among my colleagues. In 1993, inspired by the strong Hellenic American presence in my own congressional district, I co-founded, and now Co-Chair, the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues. The Caucus is composed of

seventy-two, bipartisan members who are committed to bringing the voices of Hellenic Americans to the floor of the U.S. Capitol. Since its beginning in 1993, the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues has grown in both size and strength to foster and improve relations between the United States and Greece. The Hellenic Caucus serves to strengthen the voice of Hellenic Americans in promoting legislation, monitoring and arranging briefings on current events, and disseminating information to all Congressional Members on such important developments as the renewed talks between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, U.S. aid to Greece and Cyprus, and the continued conflict in the Aegean.

In the coming year, may we see peace in the Aegean, justice in Cyprus, peace in Northern Greece, and the restoration of human rights to the many cultures and people suffering throughout the world. As we celebrate the 179th anniversary of Greek Independence and the special bond of friendship between our two countries, I would like to leave you with a quote from Percy Shelley, "We are all Greeks! Our laws, our literature, our art, have their roots in Greece."

AIDS IMPACT ON LATIN AMERICANS AND HISPANICS

HON. CHARLES A. GONZALEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 23, 2000

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that AIDS is a global issue. What happens overseas always affects what happens in the U.S. It is in America's national interest to ensure that we do all we can to assist all countries in addressing HIV/AIDS, not only because of the potential for a tremendous loss of life, but for economic, political and security reasons.

Globally, about 2.6 million people worldwide will die of AIDS this year, the most of any years since the epidemic began, according to a report by the United Nations AIDS program. About 16.3 million people have already died of AIDS since 1981. In addition, about 5.6 million new infections with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) will occur this year, raising the number of people currently living with the disease to about 33.6 million, with more than 23 million of those individuals being in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 1.3 million individuals living with HIV and AIDS are in Latin America and some 360,000 are in the Caribbean. It is estimated that some 920,000 individuals living with HIV and AIDS are in North America.

Some 300,000 Americans are infected with HIV and do not know it since they have never been tested for HIV infection. Sadly, my own city of San Antonio has experienced over 3,704 cases of people with AIDS; 53% of these people have died. This means that over 1,950 people in San Antonio have died from this disease. Of the reported cases of AIDS in San Antonio, 48% are in the Hispanic community, 39% are White and 11% are Black. The majority of San Antonio's population is of Hispanic origin and maintains close ties with Mex-

ico and other countries in Central and South America. Many return to visit, to work and live, and then return to the United States. Many of my constituents are very interested in reuniting with their families, bring family members to the U.S. to visit or become U.S. citizens.

AIDS has affected Hispanics in San Antonio more than in most other communities around the country. One thing we can all do is to continue to educate our friends and relatives about AIDS, not only as to its causes but also on its impact on our local, national and global community. We can also push for increased funding for research and treatment of this deadly disease.

Our efforts targeting African Americans here in the United States, and our efforts to address AIDS in Africa and elsewhere are to be commended and expanded. We must do more for those most in need, and we must do more to prevent HIV from becoming a problem in those areas where it has not yet established itself. To do any less is to allow a disease that we can prevent. And we must begin now to look at how we address AIDS in Latin America so that we can prevent it from becoming the next epicenter of the epidemic. Public health practices have shown that it is much more effective to prevent an illness than to treat an illness. Clearly, what we do now in our efforts to address HIV will affect the quality of our lives tomorrow.

We must fight the complacency that is threatening our efforts to address HIV and AIDS in the U.S. and worldwide. Yes, new drug combination therapies have prolonged the lives of many Americans who have access to them, who can afford them, and who can tolerate them. Unfortunately, not all have access or can afford them. Imagine how difficult it will be for those in countries outside the U.S. whose average health care expenditures are less than a few hundred dollars a year to pay for drugs which can cost up to \$14,000 a year in the United States.

Unfortunately, many of our leaders are still afraid to discuss HIV/AIDS in public. This silence is also evident in many Latin American countries where AIDS is just starting to take hold. This silence only leads to continued denial that AIDS is affecting Latinos, and it will only lead to additional infections and deaths. By not publicly discussing HIV/AIDS, we send a message to our community that AIDS is not an issue of concern to us or that it is taboo. The number of cases, new infections, and deaths in our community have shown that our silence has been deadly.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus, of which I am a member, is proud of its role in securing additional funding and in providing leadership in this area. But we have a long way to go. We need the Hispanic community, especially our Hispanic leaders both here in the U.S. and in other countries, to expand their efforts. The Congressional Hispanic Caucus believes that health issues that disproportionately affect Latinos must be addressed openly and publicly. The Caucus understands the importance of public leadership in addressing HIV/AIDS as a means to educate the public of the impact that HIV/AIDS is having on the Latino community both here and internationally.

I offer these comments to honor those from the Hispanic and other communities who have